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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine metropolitan-nonmetropolitan and sex differences in the role models selected by Negro high school sophomores. A questionnaire was grouped-administered to 111 metropolitan males, 170 metropolitan females, 98 nonmetropolitan males, and 99 nonmetropolitan females. The results of the study indicated that sex does and place of residence does not make an important difference in the types of role models selected by Negro youth or in the occupational status of the role models. Important secondary findings were: (1) parents are not the most popular role models chosen by these Negro respondents: glamour figures are the most popular role models of metropolitan boys, nonmetropolitan girls, and nonmetropolitan boys; teachers are the most popular role models of metropolitan girls; and (2) family members, especially immediate family members, are frequently selected as role models by these Negro high school sophomores. Suggestions for future research include investigating why the person was chosen as a role model, why the occupation was chosen, and the effectiveness of the high school counselor and of various career information materials or programs. The bivariate relationship between role model choices and job market knowledge might also be explored. A related document is ED 048 971. (Author/HBC)

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METROPOLITAN-NONMETROPOLITAN DIFFERENCES IN THE ROLE MODELS OF NEGRO YOUTH[1]

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ABSTRACT

Although recent studies have asserted the critical importance of significant others in the status attainment process, no one study has examined metropolitan-nonmetropolitan and sex differences in the role models selected by Negro high school sophomores. This exploratory study of East Texas youth found that sex does and place of residence does not make an important difference in the types of role models selected by Negro youth or in the occupational status of the role models. Important secondary findings were: (1) parents are not the most popular role models chosen by these Negro respondents: glamour figures are the most popular role models of metropolitan boys, nonmetropolitan boys and nonmetropolitan girls; teachers are the most popular role models of metropolitan girls; and (2) family members, especially immediate family members (i.e. parents and siblings), are frequently selected as role models by these Negro high school sophomores. Implications of the findings for future research are discussed.

METROPOLITAN-NONMETROPOLITAN DIFFERENCES IN THE ROLE MODELS OF NEGRO YOUTH [1]

Despite the importance sociologists (e.g., Merton, 1957; Kemper, 1968) assign to social mobility and socialization, the types of role models which adolescents themselves select to emulate has received little attention.[2] Meanwhile, recent results support the critical importance of significant others' influence in the status attainment process (Sewell, Haller, and Portes, 1969; Sewell, Haller, and Ohlendorf, 1970:1025). Hopefully, the results of the exploratory investigation reported in this paper will encourage other researchers to delineate the occupational and non-occupational status of the role models of various respondent groups at one or more points in time.

Ginzberg and his colleagues (1951) assert that occupational choices become increasingly realistic as young people mature.[3] If the occupational choices and role models of youth at one stage of adolescence do change substantially within two years, it is important to know which factors are related to the differential selection of role models at the first point in time. If both place of residence and sex are associated with intra-racial differences at one point in time, then future analysis of (intra- and) inter-racial differences at two or more points in time will likely provide a more complete basis for understanding the linkage between these and other factors with the occupational and non-occupational status of the role models of youth and other respondent groups.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section, which reviews the relevant literature, has two parts. The first is concerned with the importance of two factors which are

reportedly associated with the status attainment of success-oriented Negro youth. The second is concerned with the findings of the few studies which have examined the association between the perceived source of influence and selected status projections of high school seniors.

Although they are derived from studies not directly concerned with the role model preferences of high school youth, two factors have been suggested which are related to the role model preferences of success-oriented American youth. Being Negro is one of them. Although middle-class goals or values dominate in American society (Dynes, Clarke, and Dinitz, 1956:212; Merton, 1957:136-137; Adams, 1967:365), the aspiration or desire for success is more common among Negroes than its actual attainment (Broom and Glenn, 1965:23-24: Blau and Duncan, 1967:404-405). The gap between success orientations and actual status attainment is especially problematic for Negro males, for many of whom the inability to find steady and well-paying (and moderately prestigious) work "undermines their authority in the family and makes them prone to desert" (Broom and Glenn, 1965:19). Indeed, Broom and Glenn (1965: 20-24) mention several facts which might suggest that Negro males identify with (or emulate) different role models than their female cohorts: (1) the main contacts of many males with the larger society are through movies and television; (2) the Negro culture emphasizes the education of females; and (3) females are better educated and therefore more able to find secure employment than males.

This part discusses three studies of the perceived sources of influence of various role models or the status projections of high

school seniors in three Southern states.[4] Uzzell (1961), in a study of the occupational aspirations of Negro male seniors in 14 urban high schools in eastern North Carolina, found (a) that of the 70 per cent who knew occupational models (persons in the occupational status they desired), three-fourths were influenced by them (b) that teaching was the occupation most aspired to, and (c) that all respondents who selected teaching knew a personal role model (i.e., a teacher). Another study, conducted in three low-income rural counties by Youmans, Grigsby, and King (1965), was broader than Uzzell's study in at least two respects: (a) it focused on educational as well as occupational aspirations; and (b) it focused on female as well as male Negro seniors. Results of the study were: (a) well over half of both males and females indicated that their parents had the greatest influence on their "plans" for "life work"; (b) mothers had greater influence on the plans for males and females than did the fathers; and (c) although teachers and ministers reportedly had the "greatest influence" on the plans of only a minor portion of the youth, 20 percent of the males indicated that teachers had the greatest influence on their plans. Given (a) Ginzberg's (1951) assertion that the occupational choices of youth crystallize as they mature and (b) the assumption that the choices of sophomores would be less crystallized than they would be later, the latter finding suggests substantial sex differences in the role model preferences of Negro sophomores.[5]

This expectation receives some additional support by the results of Drabick's (1967) study of the educational and occupational expectations

of Negro male and female North Carolina seniors: although there were no significant differences in the perceived source of the influence upon the youth's plans to attend college, there were major differences in the perceived source of influence upon occupational expectations. More specifically, males considered their fathers and brothers as greater sources of influence than were their mothers and sisters; the opposite situation applied to females. In addition, females mentioned friends as sources of influence less often than did males, were somewhat more likely to consider the decision their own, and were considerably more prone to acknowledge the influence of relatives. Although the study reported that place of residence was not related to the perceived source of influence of respondents, there were no metropolitan-nonmetropolitan comparisons -- the categories were town, village, rural nonfarm and farm. Although none of these three studies focused on high school sophomores nor on metropolitan-nonmetropolitan differences on the perceived source on influenced upon education or occupational plans, they do collectively suggest that the role model preferences of Negro high school sophomores are likely related to sex but may not be related to place of residence.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The analysis to be reported below is structured in terms of the following specific research objectives:

(1) To determine whether there are place of residence differences in the types of role models selected by Negro youth.

(2) To determine whether there are sex differences in the types of role models chosen by Negro youth.

(3) To determine whether there are place of residence differences in the occupational status of the types of role models selected by Negro youth.

(4) To determine whether there are sex differences in the occupational status of the types of role models chosen by Negro youth.

Respondents and Collection of Data

The procedures used in the selection of the study population provided respondents representing extreme polar positions in rural-urban variations of communities in reference to location, size of place, and density. During the spring of 1966, all high school sophomores attending school in three all rural, nonmetropolitan counties of East Texas were interviewed. In addition to rurality, these counties were purposefully selected to provide study units composed of a disproportionately large number of Negroes and poor families.

The study counties are in an area characterized by social structures and values associated with a cultural configuration that might best be labeled the "traditional South." This is evidenced by the fact that at the time of the interviews only 1 of the 23 schools involved in the study had experienced more than "token" integration and most school units were very small, ranging in size from 30-300 students. The sophomore classes of the 13 all-Negro schools involved ranged from 5 to 30 students. The urban respondents consisted of a 50 percent sample of sophomore homerooms in a large all-Negro high school located in a low-income ward of Houston.[6]

A questionnaire requiring from 35 minutes to an hour to complete was group-administered in each school contacted. The respondents were assured of anonymity before answering the questionnaire. Since no

attempt was made to contact students enrolled in school but not present the day of the interview (8%), the nature of the non-response bias is unknown. The data used in this analysis include only the Negro portion of this study: 111 metropolitan males, 170 metropolitan females, 98 nonmetropolitan males, and 99 nonmetropolitan females. Respondents indicating that they were American Indian, Mexican American, or Caucasian were excluded from the analysis.

Instruments and Measures

The two independent variables, place of residence and sex, were self-indicated by respondents through simple check-off items and checked for validity against school records. The role models of the youth were determined by asking the respondent to reply to a forced-choice question: "Think of the person whom you would most want to fashion your life after." The respondent was asked to select one of the nine alternative response categories:

(1) A teacher or school counselor
(2) Your father or mother
(3) An older brother or sister
(4) A relative not in your immediate family
(5) A close friend, not related to you
(6) A movie or TV star
(7) A famous athlete
(8) An important government official
(9) Other (Who?_____)

For purpose of analysis the original categories of "movie or TV star," "famous athlete," and important "government official" were collapsed into a more inclusive category representing "glamour" figures. In addition, a number of responses originally marked by the respondent as other were reclassified into other alternatives, particularly the "glamour" and a new analytical category, "non-glamour, professional and

technical."[7] The occupational status of the role model, the other dependent variable in the analysis, was determined by asking the respondent to reply to an open-ended question (which immediately followed the above-mentioned question): "What is this person's job?" The responses were grouped into one of the following categories: (1) farm or ranch owner or manager; (2) laborer (including farm); (3) skilled trade, craft, or work; (4) operative or enlisted man in military; (5) owner, manager or official of company, business, or governmental office; (6) sales and clerical work; (7) professional or technical worker or military officer; (8) glamour (professional sports, entertainer); and (9) housewife.[8]

Design for Analysis

The analysis is reported in two sections, each of which consists of two parts. The first section includes a cross-classification of the identity of role models by place of residence and by sex. The second section includes a cross-classification of the occupational status of role models by place of residence and by sex. Where appropriate, chi-square tests were used to estimate the statistical significance of observed differences.

RESULTS

Identity of Role Models

Place of residence differences in the identity of role models selected by Negro sophomores were generally minor: metropolitan and nonmetropolitan profiles were basically similar for boys and for girls (Table 1). Several secondary patterns contributing to the statistical

significance of the metropolitan-nonmetropolitan differences in the dependent variable are worthy of note: (1) metropolitan youth select a larger variety of role models than do nonmetropolitan youth; for example, nearly three-fourths of the nonmetropolitan males selected parents or glamour figures; (2) more metropolitan youth choose friends as role models than do nonmetropolitan youth; and (3) more nonmetropolitan than metropolitan youth select glamour figures as role models. In brief, regardless of sex, metropolitan youth chose more friends and fewer glamour figures than did nonmetropolitan youth.

(Table 1 about here)

Sex differences in the identity of role models selected by Negro sophomores were common and occurred independently of place of residence (Table 2). Thus, sex was more important than place of residence in producing differences in the dependent variable. Indeed, all of the notable patterns contributing to the high level of statistical significance were not linked to place of residence: (1) glamour figures were selected as role models by more males than females; (2) females chose teachers as role models more than did males; and (3) more females than males selected relatives to emulate.

(Table 2 about here)

Going beyond the differences associated with either place of residence or sex, there is a more general observation about the selection patterns that holds regardless of place of residence or sex: parents were <u>not</u> the most popular role models chosen by Negro high school sophomores. That is, glamour figures -- movie or TV stars, famous athletes, and important government officials -- were the most popular

Table 1. Role Models of Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Negro youth by Sex.

Type of Role Model	Male[a]		Female[b]	
	Metropolitan N=105	Nonmetropolitan N=94	Metropolitan N=157	Nonmetropolitan N=97
	Percent			
Teacher or school counselor	10	9	22	22
Father or mother	17	25	18	19
Older brother or sister	8	10	5	7
Relative not in immediate family	11	4	19	20
Close friend, not relative	12	2	19	6
Glamour	38	49	15	25
Non-glamour[c]	4	1	2	1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
No Information	2	4	5	0

[a] $X^2 = 13.32$ df = 5 $.02 < P < .05$

[b] $X^2 = 11.45$ df = 5 $.02 < P < .05$

[c] Excluded from chi-square analysis.

Table 2. Role Models of Male and Female Negro Youth by Residence.

Type of Role Model	Metropolitan[a]		Nonmetropolitan[b]	
	Male N=105	Female N=157	Male N=94	Female N=97)
	Percent			
Teacher or school counselor	10	22	9	22
Father or mother	17	18	25	19
Older brother or sister	8	5	10	7
Relative not in immediate family	11	19	4	20
Close friend not related	12	19	2	6
Glamour	38	15	49	25
Non-glamour[c]	4	2	1	1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
No information	6	13	4	2

[a] $X^2 = 25.16$ df = 5 P <.001

[b] $X^2 = 24.89$ df = 5 P <.001

[c] Excluded from chi-square analysis.

role models. Although parents were fairly popular role models among all four respondent groups, they were not the most popular role models of any respondent group. Indeed, less than 20 percent of the metropolitan males, metropolitan females, or nonmetropolitan females respectively chose to pattern their lives after their parents. Nevertheless, the data clearly indicate the importance of family members -- especially those in the immediate family.

Occupational Status of Role Models

Place of residence differences in the occupational status of role models selected by male and female Negro sophomores were generally minor (Table 3). Several secondary patterns are worthy of note. Those which were not sex-linked include the following: (1) more metropolitan youth chose role models that held professional-related occupational statuses than did their nonmetropolitan cohorts; and (2) more nonmetropolitan youth selected role models that held glamour-related occupational statuses than did their metropolitan counterparts. Those selection patterns which were sex-linked include the following: (1) although 63 percent of both the metropolitan males and of the nonmetropolitan males selected role models that held professional- or glamour-related occupational status, considerably more of the nonmetropolitan males (47 percent) than of the metropolitan males (32 percent) selected role models in glamour-related fields; conversely, more metropolitan males (31 percent) than nonmetropolitan males (19 percent) chose role models who held statuses in professional or related fields; and (2) although role models in professional-related fields were the most

popular type of role model for both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan females, the popularity of role models in glamour-related fields differed considerably between the two respondent groups: whereas 20 percent of the nonmetropolitan females selected role models in glamour fields, only eight percent of the metropolitan females did so.

(Table 3 about here)

Although place of residence differences in the occupational statuses held by the role models chosen by the Negro sophomores were generally minor, sex differences were substantial (Table 4). Although both of the following two patterns contributed to the statistical significance of male-female differences in the dependent variable, neither pattern was linked to place of residence: (1) more females than males selected role models who occupy positions in professional or related fields; and (2) more males than females chose role models who held positions in glamour-related fields. Thus, the most popular role models of Negro sophomore males and females were respectively located in glamour- and professional-related fields.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Place of residence differences in the dependent variables did not reflect substantial categorical differences in the role models selected by the Negro high school sophomores in this study. That is to say that the general profiles varied considerably but the selection of each particular type of role model and the statuses held by the role models did not. This conclusion, though not directly comparable, is similar to that made by Drabick (1967). Although he focused on perceived source of influence on the educational and occupational expectations (rather than the role model choices) of Negro seniors from town, village, rural

Table 3. Occupational Status of Role Models of Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Negro youth by Sex.

Occupational Status of Role Model	Male[a]		Female[b]	
	Metropolitan N=100	Nonmetropolitan N=90	Metropolitan N=154	Nonmetropolitan N=95
	Percent			
Farm or ranch owner or manager[d]	0	2	0	3
Laborer (including farm)	11	8	4	7
Skilled trade, craft or work	8	3	6	11
Operative or enlisted man in military	5	10	3	2
Owner, manager, or official of company business of government office[c]	9	4	6	4
Sales or clerical work[c]	4	5	10	6
Professional or echnical worker or military officer	31	19	57	43
Glamour (professional sports, entertainer)	32	47	8	20
Housewife[d]	0	2	6	4
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
No information	11	8	16	4

[a] $X^2 = 9.93$ df = 5 $.05 < P < .10$

[b] $X^2 = 11.56$ df = 5 $.02 < P < .05$

[c] Combined for chi-square analysis.

[d] Excluded from chi-square analysis.

Table 4. Occupational Status of Role Models of Male and Female Negro youth by Residence.

Occupational Status of Role Model	Metropolitan[a]		Nonmetropolitan[b]	
	Male N=100	Female N=154	Male N=90	Female N=95
	Percent			
Farm or ranch owner or manager[d]	0	0	2	3
Laborer (including farm)	11	4	8	7
Skilled trade, craft, or work	8	6	3	11
Operative or enlisted man in military	5	3	10	2
Owner, manager, or official of comapny business of government office[c]	9	6	4	4
Sales or clerical work[c]	4	10	5	6
Professional or technical worker or military officer	31	57	19	43
Glamour (professional sports, entertainer)	32	8	47	20
Housewife[d]	0	6	2	4
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
No information	11	16	8	4

[a] $X^2 = 32.48$ df = 5 P <.001

[b] $X^2 = 27.11$ df = 5 P <.001

[c] Combined for chi-square analysis.

[d] Excluded from chi-square analysis.

nonfarm, and farm backgrounds, his study and this one were similar in that place of residence was relatively unimportant. Both conclusions are not inconsistent with Riccio's (1965) finding that community of origin did not make a difference in the role models selected by migrant adolescents from the Appalachian South.

The above findings permit several suggestions for future researchers. One is to determine the frequency with which high school youth actually interact with adults who hold statuses in moderately prestigious fields; that is, youth of high school age may have limited opportunity to personally know various adults which could become a role model (or even a reference individual). Since metropolitan boys, nonmetropolitan boys, and nonmetropolitan girls selected glamour figures more than any other type of role model, it might be useful to know (1) the reasons the youth like the person chosen as a role model and (2) the reasons why they like the latter's field. It might also be useful to know the effectiveness of the high school counselor and of various career information materials or programs. The bivariate relationship between role model choices and job market knowledge might also be fruitfully explored.

Other suggestions for future research emerge from the conclusion that sex not only is related to the types of role models selected by Negro high school sophomores but also is related to the occupational status of the role models selected. First, the finding that sex did make a substantial difference in both dependent variables indicates the merit of a control for sex. Second, Negro males may select glamour figures more often than do Negro females because the former either lack regular interaction with, or have difficulty identifying with, the teachers or other male adults

who hold at least moderately prestigious occupational or non-occupational statuses. The relevance of this hypothesis is suggested by (1) our findings that more boys than girls select glamour figures and that teachers are more popular among girls than among boys, (2) Uzzell's (1961) finding that teacher was the occupation most aspired to, (3) the fact that many, if not most, teachers in Negro schools are Negro females, (4) Drabick's (1967) finding that sex is linked to the perceived sources of influence upon the educational and occupational expectations of high school seniors, and (5) the fact that many, if not most, of the youth in this study do not have the opportunity to interact frequently with family members (including relatives) or friends that are active in moderately prestigious occupations.[9]

Given the limited opportunity for Negro males in glamour-related fields (Broom and Glenn, 1965), future researchers are invited to determine whether the comparatively high preference of nonmetropolitan males for glamour figures in glamour-related fields may be indicative of a common gap between the American success ethic and its realization. Especially if they do lack personal interaction with male adults who hold at least moderately prestigious occupational and non-occupational statuses, nonmetropolitan males may be very realistic in their selection patterns: it may be expedient to emulate, at least temporarily, a moderately prestigious glamour figure, especially if the adults "available" for regular interaction in one's local environment do not hold any prestigious statuses -- occupational or non-occupational.

Especially since two-thirds of the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan males and females chose role models which held statuses in professional - or glamour-related fields, it is noteworthy that glamour figures primarily held occupational statuses in glamour-related fields. Although the data analysis did not focus on differences on an individual basis, aggregate comparisons (of the percentage of each respondent group which selects glamour figures and of the percentage of the same respondent group which chose role models with occupational status in glamour fields) indicate that the vast majority of respondents (of each group) who identify with glamour figures actually had selected role models with commensurate occupational status (Tables 1 and 3). Thus, a relatively small percentage of each respondent group identified with a glamour figure that had an occupational position in a non-glamour field; this indicates that the glamour category has substantial validity for the populations included in this analysis. At least in terms of the glamour category, the respondents in this study apparently <u>did</u> select role models on the basis of the occupational facet of that person's life style. This pattern is more pronounced among metropolitan males, non-metropolitan males, and non-metropolitan females than among metropolitan females; that is, at least 80 percent of the glamour figures selected as role models actually held positions in glamour-related fields.

Despite the fact that they are based on data obtained from purposive populations of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan high school sophomores, the results of this exploratory analysis are promising.

Although the above results allow the intepretation that there may be limited utility in designing future research with a central focus on place of residence differences in the role model selection of Negro high school sophomores, the results are inconclusive. Indeed, future research based on state or regional samples of respondents with more heterogeneous backgrounds may find that place of residence differences are very important. Research directed at racial differences in the role model selection patterns of high school youth and young adults over time might be very fruitful. Thus, panel studies could help indicate which selection pattern changes among what populations or samples, and why. Also, knowledge about racial differences in the role model selection patterns, selected status projections and perceived structural barriers could be useful. Finally, future analysis might examine sex and racial differences in the availability of and satisfaction with programs that schools and other structural entites provide to help expose the individual to various occupational and non-occupational role models.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]A revision of a paper presented at the annual meetings of the Texas Academy of Science, Nacogdoches, Texas, March 11-13, 1971. The comments of Arthur Cosby and Michael Lever are gratefully acknowledged. Katheryn Thomas Dietrich deserves recognition for her data-processing assistance. This research was supported by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station as a contribution to TAES research project H-2611. This project contributes to U. S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research Service regional research project, S-61, "Human Resource Development and Mobility in the Rural South."

[2]An important exception is the work of Riccio (1965:27), who elicited information about the role models of migrant adolescents by asking them to write a brief essay to the question, "Which people in this world would you most want to be like?"

[3]Since various concepts have been used to refer to the human development process in general and to the identification of the individual with others in particular (e.g., Shibutani, 1955:563; Turner, 1956; Straus, 1969; Burchinal, Haller and Tawes, 1962:8; Linn, 1966; Pugh, 1966: 8836; Kemper, 1968:32-34; and Sewell, Haller and Portes, 1969:84-85), this investigation begins with some conceptual distinctions: (1) occupational choices are the psychological preferences or desires that the individual has regarding his own work status (Kuvlesky and Bealer, 1966: 267); (2) human development is a process resulting in an increase in the opportunity for people to attain desired goals (Warner, 1968:1); (3) socialization is a process in which the individual, through interaction, becomes a social being and participant in society (Clausen, 1968:3), (4) identification is a process in which an object becomes meaningful to an

individual; and (5,6) a role model is an individual with which another individual identifies in only one or a selected few of his roles, whereas a reference individual is an individual whose values and behavior are sought to be approximated in his several roles by another individual (Merton, 1957:302-303). Thus, the concept role model has as its referent relatively specific and limited roles or role sets, whereas reference individual refers to generalized roles of a more inclusive nature (e.g., middle class adult). Although both concepts are useful to an understanding of human development, socialization, or identification processes, this paper concerns the former concept -- role model. For recent analysis of black identification as a coping response to "tensions" generated by the perception of status inconsistency, see Chiricos, Pearson, and Fendrich, 1970. For a recent discussion of a "developmental model," see Cosby (1971), who cites Ginzberg, et.al, 1951; Blau, et.al., 1956; Musgrave, 1967; Rodgers, 1966.

[4]Earlier studies have examined the youth's preference for father or mother (Nimkoff, 1942) or the influence of selected socialization agents and peers on such factors as educational (Slocum, 1967; Kandel and Lesser, 1969), or occupational (Simpson, 1962) aspirations, occupational role knowledge (DeFleur and DeFleur, 1967), and plans to farm (Haller, 1960). The Youmans, Grigsby and King (1965) and Drabick (1967) studies discussed below also reported results for white seniors.

[5]This assumption has been explicitly tested with a panel study of Negro youth; see Oberle and Kuvlesky (1971).

[6]Since the purposive sampling greatly restricts the generalizability of the findings, future researchers interested in this exploratory study's findings are encouraged to use random sampling.

[7]Limits on space required for publication preclude the presentation of the detailed tabular presentations of these original categories. Copies of these will be provided upon request.

[8]For a description of the original categories, see Edwards (1940).

[9]Obordo (1968) noted the disproportionate lower class status of Negroes among the nonmetropolitan population from which a part of the study population was drawn.